



Health and Human Services Cabinet Agencies

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NEW FUNDING NEEDED TO SUSTAIN HEALTH, MEDICAL AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE INITIATIVES PRESENTLY OPERATING

Continued increases in the cost of health care, record numbers of Oklahomans in need of social services and an alarming number of Oklahomans without access to healthcare have placed an unprecedented strain on the state's health and human service infrastructure.

According to Secretary of Health Terry Cline and Secretary of Human Services Howard Hendrick, \$324 million in new funding during the upcoming legislative session is required to address these needs and to sustain the level of health, medical and social assistance initiatives presently operating.

Oklahoma has historically ranked as one of the unhealthiest states in the country.

“When it comes to the health of our children and families, I am confident that Oklahomans do not want to settle for a ranking of 40th in the country. To turn the tide, we must prioritize our health as one of the wisest investments we can make in our future,” said Secretary Cline.

Secretary Hendrick pointed to the fact that many of the recently created jobs lack benefits or pay poorly, which requires assistance for child care and other social services. Record levels of Oklahomans are working, but not making enough to adequately care for their families. Consequently, record levels of Oklahomans are receiving food stamps, and the demand for subsidized child care continues to grow.

Without additional funding, more than one-third of all Oklahoma children could lose access to healthcare through losses in Medicaid.

Further, an ever-growing aging population continues to be a significant contributor to the demand for social services, especially for long-term care and adult protective services.

Increased funding will allow state officials to prevent a loss of healthcare services to 600,000 Oklahomans currently receiving medical care through Medicaid. Additionally, money will provide for quality of care initiatives in nursing homes, services for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities, community-based services for the elderly, programs serving juveniles, substance abuse and mental health services for families and to sustain the progress of nationally recognized child development centers.

Cline and Hendrick said they are ready to work with other state leaders to address the severity of this need.

“There is an urgent demand on all of us to stand together and meet these needs for the benefit of all Oklahomans,” said Hendrick.

The state’s health and human service programs provide services to individuals, families and communities at-large that, directly or indirectly, impact all Oklahomans.

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Editors Note: The Oklahoma Health and Human Services Cabinet agencies are the state's principal agencies for protecting the health of all Oklahomans and providing essential human services.

Agencies in the Health Cabinet include the State Department of Health, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Health Care Authority (Medicaid agency) and the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust.

Agencies within the Human Services Cabinet include the Department of Human Services, Office of Juvenile Affairs, Department of Rehabilitative Services, J.D. McCarty Center and the University Hospital Authorities and Trust.